



Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office

Operations Directorate — Fact Sheet

Theater Engagement Plan Review

ISSUE: Personnel Recovery and Theater Engagement Planning

BACKGROUND: The concept of combatant commands formulating Theater Engagement Plans (TEPs) resulted from a tasking contained in the 1997 Defense Planning Guidance (DPG). TEPs are designed as a system to implement the “shape” imperative of the Defense Strategy developed during the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). Civil Search and Rescue, international cooperation in search and rescue, and combined personnel recovery activities can be major components to “shaping” the environment and may be included in TEPs. The most important part of the TEP process is that it explicitly links NCA strategic direction to the specific theater-level engagement.

DISCUSSION: TEPs enable combatant commanders and the National Command Authorities (NCA) to understand better the requirements imposed on the armed forces and associated agencies to shape the international security environment. They give decision-makers a clearer understanding of the linkage between National direction and theater-specific execution. Secondly, they clearly portray the cost of that engagement.

The TEP process uses the deliberate wartime planning model to evaluate the “return on engagement investment” for each of the numerous engagement activities theaters execute. The process will eventually provide a complete picture of the expenditures of resources necessary to execute the “shape” imperative of the Defense Strategy.

Each combatant commander publishes a TEP for his theater annually providing detailed information on type and scope of engagement activities. The responsible CINC determines which activities to include in the TEP. Examples of engagement activity categories include operational activities, combined exercises, and other foreign military interaction that includes combined training and education, military contacts, security assistance, humanitarian assistance, and any other activity the commander designates. DPMO believes that international cooperation on SAR programs that the CINCs have undertaken with varying intensity are excellent examples of peacetime operations undertaken to “shape” the future environment.

The commanders forward their TEPs to the Joint Staff for review and subsequent integration into a “global family of plans.” Following the Chairman’s approval, the Joint Staff forwards the TEPs to the USD(P) for review to ensure they conform to established U.S. Government priorities. Within the Office of the USD(P) the Office of the ASD for Strategy and Threat Reduction is the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for the TEP review and within the Office of the ASD(ISA), Regional Affairs chairs the Regional Working Group (RWG) that reviews all TEPs. As a member of the RWG, we are well positioned to represent personnel recovery issues during the review. During our review of each command’s TEP we first analyze the President’s Prioritized Regional Objectives (PRO) that lay out our national goals in each region. From that, we then examine the combatant command’s Strategic Concept to ensure it supports the PROs. Finally, we review the activity annex of the command’s TEP to ensure the command has programmed activities (exercises, training, assistance, etc.) that support his Strategic Concept. We provide our comments to ISA/Regional Affairs.